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Food and Home Notes

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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June 4, 1973

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FOOD
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Remember that whole-wheat flour is higher in fat than white flour, so it should be stored in a cool place, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture home economists.

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Brown sugar imparts its own distinctive flavor in cooking—it helps to moisten food, too.

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Does the depth of your pan make a difference in baking? You can believe it does! Use the appropriate size and number of pans when baking.

* * *

If you reduce a recipe—to serve four people instead of eight—your cooking time may be different, too. A larger amount of food may take longer to cook; a smaller amount may be overcooked if not watched and removed when it is done, according to USDA researchers.

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Only a few foods contain much iron—liver is a particularly good source. Lean meats, heart, kidney, shellfish, dry beans, dry peas, dark-green vegetables, dried fruit, egg yolk, and molasses also count as good sources.

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MILK

—and the future

Milk, too, may someday be polyunsaturated. Perhaps—according to U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists—milk may be changed even before it leaves the cow so that it contains more polyunsaturated fat.

Milk fat normally contains about three percent polyunsaturated fat—which is not a problem. However, consumers may decide that they would like—or even should have—more unsaturated fat. It has been corroborated by chemists and dairy husbandrymen from USDA that cows on unsaturated fat diets will produce milk with more polyunsaturated fatty acids. Australian scientists originally led this research.

However, researchers need to eliminate problems of taste and cost—because, unsaturated fats are more susceptible to oxidation than saturated ones. Off flavor sometimes develops. Adding anti-oxidants to the milk is one possible solution.

It may also be possible—someday—to produce meat whose polyunsaturated fat content is high.

ALMOST ALL — about onions —

Yes, there really has been an onion shortage—quantity down and prices up! In fact, it was the greatest shortage in fifty years, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service.

The spring crop coming to market now from Texas, California, and Arizona is responsible for bringing onion prices back down from the record high they reached earlier this spring, according to USDA's director of the Fruit and Vegetable Division.

However, USDA's Statistical Reporting Service estimates the spring onion crop is down 9 percent from last year, so prices probably will remain above normal until the summer crop reaches the market.

The blame for the absence of the "rose of roots" from the American dinner tables earlier this year lies chiefly with the weather and rare coincidence of crop damage it caused in the number two and three onion producing states, Texas and New York. California is number one.

New York's crop is a main source of supply for all States in the East. Its product is the storage onion—the bright yellow, pungent bulb usually in ample retail supply through the fall and winter.

The trouble to the upstate New York crop began on June 18, 1972—and lasted until June 23—and was called "Agnes".

What happened to this "pivotal onion producing state" as it is sometimes called? It created a huge vacuum in the principal Eastern storage crop. The rains were so heavy (from Agnes) that they physically washed out the soil and it was impossible to replant many of the same fields.

— and the Shortage

Tropical storm Agnes sliced New York's onion production in half—and that alone was enough to reduce the whole U.S. crop by nearly seven percent. In fact, January 1973 storage holdings in New York were 44 million pounds—little more than a third of the 129 million pounds of a year earlier.

Under normal conditions, onion lovers might have looked to the 1973 early spring crop in south Texas to alleviate the March and April shortage. But this past winter brought cold weather and rain.

Looking back—during the Korean War and World War II, onion supplies were a little tight—but, this has been the "greatest onion shortage" according to records from the Fruit and Vegetable economists.

Prices for onions (at shipping points) in the first half of April 1973 averaged \$24.90 for 100 pounds according to USDA records. Compare that with a previous record-high of \$10.20 in March 1948.

But—then there has been a worldwide shortage, too—which compounded the domestic onion situation this year. The U.S. void could not be filled with imports from western Europe, Chile, or Canada, because they were suffering from scarcities of their own. Although Mexico doubled its normal exports to the United States—this was still not nearly enough to make up for the short crop in New York.

The American consumer likes onions. But—how many onions does the American consumer want? Statistically—even when supplies do not meet demand, and prices are up, each of the 210 million consumers still wants 13 pounds of onions each year. This includes onions consumed daily in vast quantities in America's network of restaurant and roadside chains, the onion products—especially dried onions and French fried onion rings. And, we use a lot of those, too.

ON THE MEAT SCENE:

...."it may look like meat, taste like meat..."

If you open a can of chili con carne and it looks like it has a lot of meat in it—it tastes like it, too—but some of that "meat" could be textured vegetable product ("TVP" for short). You can tell if it is—or not—by the ingredient statement.

A description of TVP comes down to two easy words: versatile and nutritious. TVP can be processed so that it has the taste, look, and texture of meat. When used instead of cereals and other starch-based binders, TVP can increase the protein content of foods. The quality of the protein in nonsupplemented TVP is not as good as actual meat protein, the U.S. Department of Agriculture says. But, TVP costs considerably less than meat, too.

It is difficult to distinguish between TVP and meat in processed foods like chili con carne, meat stew, meat loaf, hash, spaghetti, and other kinds of meat sauces and gravy, so USDA has proposed new regulations which would require products whose appearance and taste are enhanced by TVP to carry names that tell the consumer.

Chili con carne, for example, must contain at least 40 percent meat under Federal Meat Inspection regulations. Under the proposal, chili con carne would still have to meet this requirement. A manufacturer meeting this requirement and adding more than 3 percent large-particle TVP to his formula would have to label his product "chili con carne with textured vegetable product." If he adds coloring to that TVP, he'd have to tell you that in the product name, too.

If he uses TVP particles, he could add them in any amount and still call his product "chili con carne." But—in either case—he would have to list the specific TVP ingredients in the ingredient statement on his labels.

USDA is interested in your comments on this proposal...send them before July 6 to the USDA Hearing Clerk, Washington, D.C. 20250 (in duplicate, please).

COMMENTS AND INQUIRIES TO:

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